

Committee for Employment and Learning Visit Report

CAN, Ballymoney, 25 February 2015

Background

As part of its Inquiry into Post School Special Educational Need Provision in Northern Ireland the Committee for Employment and Learning agreed, to go on a study visit to Compass Advocacy Network (CAN), Ballymoney.

Attendees

The following Committee Members attended:

Mr Robin Swann MLA, Chairperson
Mr Pat Ramsey MLA
Ms Claire Sugden MLA

Mrs Cathie White - Clerk to the Committee for Employment and Learning
Mr Vincent Gribbin – Assistant Clerk to the Committee for Employment and Learning

CAN Staff:

Janet Schofield, Director
Linda McKendry, Manager
Kim Anderson, Training Officer
Steven Madison, Upcycling Project Asst.
Ulf Keller, Frames/Recycling Project Asst.
Adrian Hanna, Project Assistant/Volunteer
Siobhan Lyttle, Base Co-Ordinator
Mark Jones, Base Co-Ordinator

Partner Organisations:

Norman Sterrit, Triangle Support Employment Service/Alternative Angles
Victoria Redmond,
Theresa Hazzard, Mencap
Adrian Winchbourne, Greenlight Gateway (Ballycastle)

CAN Management Board:

Lyn Moffat, Ballymoney Community Resource Centre/CAN Management Board
Liam Beckett, CAN Board of Directors
Alison Grundle, CAN Board of Directors
Emma Patterson, CAN Management Board
Emma Rea, CAN Management Board

Service Users:

Amanda Somers
Richmond Wylie
Jonathan Campbell
Wesley Nevin
Conor Cosby
Derek Campbell
Eddie Huey
Melody Craig
Timothy Owens
Shauna McClelland
Rachel Owens
Nicola Madison
Natasha Hill
Zara McKendry
Philip Owens
Trevor Purdon
Hayley Allen
Laura McCollum

Meeting

On arrival the Committee had an informal discussion with the representatives of CAN and their partner organisations regarding the issues facing individuals with learning difficulties transitioning from school. The Committee was also given a tour of the facilities and the CAN shop in Ballymoney High Street.

Issues raised

- Extending the SEN age would not be beneficial for all those who have a Statement as there are many who have ambitions to leave school and get in to training and, ultimately, employment. The CAN Director advised that CAN service users were overwhelmingly opposed to extending the Statement to 25 years of age but recognise that for some people this may be a good thing.
- Schools need to do more for individuals with learning disabilities to improve their independence such as independent travel, cooking and cleaning.
- Individuals with learning disabilities need to be part of the community and training should take part in the community. Keeping individuals with learning disabilities separated means that they are ill-equipped to function in society when they eventually leave training.
- Most of the innovative training for individuals with learning disabilities across Northern Ireland is carried out by voluntary and community sector, funded by ESF and that if this goes then this sector would disappear.

